

It is a wonderful piece of architecture. Those of us who have had the privilege of taking the architect's tour and taking constituents to the top of the dome know it intimately from that standpoint.

But just looking at it from the outside, and looking at its intricate workings under those beautiful lights, makes us in awe of it as a building and a structure, and realizing that structure was conceived years and years ago before we had all of the modern technology we have today.

But it is far more than an architectural structure, it is a symbol of this great free Nation. It is, like our Constitution and our Bill of Rights, a part of our heritage. We have this greatest free Nation because we had Founding Fathers with the wisdom to adopt a Constitution and the Bill of Rights that protect us from government, that require government to be closest to the people in the States and local communities, where they can, and have a Federal or central government only to do those things of national security and matters which really cannot be done by an individual one of the 50 States.

We have also a check and balance system, where the legislative branch, the executive branch, and the judicial branch of governments work together in harmony to produce outcomes that sometimes, upon their initial appearances, look messy, untidy, and difficult, but they are not. They are actually things that can resolve, because of those mechanisms, great crisis problems in ways that do not involve bloodshed, that do not involve riot in the streets, that simply involve a serious debate and serious consideration; in ways that engage the American public in a democratic fashion.

We just witnessed one of those great moments in our history: a presidential election that went on for days after the balloting, in which we had lots of partisan views and personal opinions, and engaged the American people.

Some thought that the election should have been resolved sooner; some thought it should have gone on beyond the Supreme Court decision of this past few days. But the reality is that our system worked. The beauty of it is that our Founding Fathers' gift to us has indeed shown forth again in bringing about in a fashion that our republic is proud of the resolution of the issue of who will be the next president of the United States and the next Vice President, George W. Bush and Richard Cheney, Dick Cheney.

I am honored to have served in this body, to have been a Member over the last 20 years of this House of Representatives; to have been a party to a small piece of history for events that have unfolded here in my time.

During that tenure lots of things have happened: We have seen the end of the Cold War. We have seen the fall of

the Berlin Wall. We have seen the balancing of the Federal budget. We have seen the advent of the age of the Internet. We have seen vast changes in our lives.

But it is the future to which we should turn. It is to the next generation. It is to the children who are in school today that we will look to leadership. I would remind them that there is no finer place to look than in history and on the Constitution, and all that this Capitol represents, and to the structures that were set up by our Founding Fathers.

Learn discipline, learn history, study great literature, get a good education, and participate in government. Participate at any level, whether that is running for office oneself, or simply getting out and voting and encouraging others to get out and vote, or working in campaigns. But show that interest.

Learn, study, do what others who having gone before you have done, and be interested enough to protect these freedoms, protect our structure, protect the strongest military in the world to keep America safe while we are strong, and to protect these institutions that are valuable, so our children and grandchildren for years to come will be able to have these great freedoms that were given to us.

Again, it has been my great privilege to have served the U.S. House of Representatives and the people of this Nation in this office. As I leave tonight and say farewell in my last moment on the House of Representatives floor, I want to thank all that I have served with, both the Members and the staff and those who are here tonight, those who work in the U.S. House, work on the floor of this House, work in the cloakrooms of both parties. We owe a debt of gratitude. I want to thank those people.

It has been a great privilege. It will be a great honor to look from the outside as a private citizen and watch the workings of this body, for I know not only what a great institution this is, but what a great institution it will continue to be because of the people who are here, because of the interests served, and because our young people, generation after generation, will continue to revitalize our system of government and make this continue to be the greatest free nation in the history of the world.

#### THE INDIAN AMERICAN FRIENDSHIP COUNCIL AND STRENGTHENING INDIA-AMERICA TIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I just want to take some of the time this

evening before I yield to my colleague, the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN), to talk about the activities of the Indian American Friendship Council.

I noticed that the previous speaker, and I guess he is now in the Chair, I wanted to say that the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MCCOLLUM) who is now presiding over the House of Representatives as the Speaker was, with myself, the founder of the Indian American Caucus and the Indian American Friendship Council which the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) and I are about to talk about, and worked very closely with the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian-Americans from the beginning when it was founded to try to bring the United States and India closer together, and to also deal with some of the concerns and issues that the Indian-American community had here in the United States.

One of the accomplishments that the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MCCOLLUM) made, and I am sure he is very proud of, is the fact that the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian-Americans has grown now. It is actually the largest caucus in the House of Representatives. The gentleman's involvement with it from the very beginning was a very important part of its success.

Let me say that not only do I appreciate the gentleman's contribution, but I know that the Indian-American community appreciates it a great deal. Whenever I go to any event whether there is an Indian-American community, they constantly make reference to the fact that the caucus has been successful, what we have accomplished, and talk about the various things we have done.

I just wanted to pay tribute to the gentleman as well this evening on another aspect of the many things the gentleman did during his career here in the House of Representatives.

Let me say, the reason that the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) and I are talking specifically about the Indian American Friendship Council is because this session of Congress, which will close this evening here in the House, I think was one of the most successful Congresses in terms of trying to bring the United States and India closer together, and making not only our colleagues in the government but I think the American people in general aware of the need to increase warm relations between the United States and India.

When I was about to get up this evening and mention the contributions of the Indian American Friendship Council, and I looked on their website, I noticed that the lead theme, if you will, was "Bridging the world's two greatest democracies." That is what the Friendship Council is all about,

trying to bring the world's two great democracies together.

Over the 7 or 8 years now that we have had the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian-Americans, I think we have accomplished a lot in that regard. If I go back 7 or 8 years, at that time many people I think both in India and in the United States thought of the two countries as not only not partners, but maybe even I would not say enemies, certainly, but maybe on opposite sides of the fence on many issues, whether it was the economy or the development of trade or security issues, or whatever.

Certainly over that last 7 or 8 years we have accomplished a lot to change that, and the Indian American Friendship Council has played a role.

I wanted to give particular thanks this evening to Dr. Krishna Reddy, the founder and still the president of the Friendship Council. One of the things that Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle certainly cannot forget is that every year in the summer, usually I think it is in July, the Indian American Friendship Council has a big event, basically a day-long conference, which concludes with a banquet in the evening where many Members of Congress participate.

I think there is more participation by Members of Congress in that conference and in that banquet than any other event put on by the Indian-American community here in Washington.

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It is because Dr. Reddy and the people involved in the Indian American Friendship Council who really go out of their way to make it clear that Congressmen and Senators are important, and that the only way, if you will, that we can accomplish the goals of bringing the United States and India closer together is by having the community work with Congress and work with their Members of Congress to accomplish that goal and to basically say what their concerns are.

I went through again the Web site of the Friendship Council, and I saw a list of about 10 goals that the Friendship Council tries to achieve, and every one of these is, I think, very significant in terms of U.S.-India affairs, as well as the role of the Indian American community.

I just wanted to, if I could, very quickly list these. The goals basically say, and the first one is to forge better overall ties with an emerging power that is the world's largest democracy, better ties within the United States and India. That is in general.

Second, to give concrete expression to our shared democratic values and our interests in strengthening evolving democracies. What they mean by that is that the council has played a major role in getting the Indian American community involved in government, involved in civic affairs, whether that

means registering to vote, getting out to vote, or working for candidates, or lobbying in a positive way in Washington or a State capital for candidates.

The third goal is to urge Indian progress towards global nonproliferation and security norms; very important, and not an easy task, because we know that with the detonating of nuclear weapons or the testing, I should say, of nuclear weapons in India a few years ago, there was a major concern about whether India will continue on the path towards nonproliferation.

The council has made it clear that that is the path that both the Indian government, the U.S. Government and all governments should proceed down. Nonproliferation is a goal. I commend the Friendship Council for having that goal.

Fourth is to maximize our partnership and trade investment and information technology exchanges with one of the world's largest economies, and one of the world's largest middle classes. We do not even need to comment on that one. Obviously, there has been a tremendous growth in trade between our two countries. There are tremendous opportunities in the information technology field. Indian Americans have played a major role obviously in the information technology field here in the United States as well as in India.

Next is to broaden and deepen our relations with the world class Indian players in the vital area of information technology. Again, we have explained that, and, furthermore, to enhance our joint efforts on urgent global issues including terrorism and narcotics.

When President Clinton went to India in March, and in that historic visit, which the council had been urging for a long time and Dr. Reddy have been preparing the way for for a long time, one of the major issues that was addressed was terrorism. And it was also addressed when Prime Minister Vajpayee came here to the United States before the House of Representatives in September, and significant progress has been made between the two countries on the goal of trying to get rid or trying to address international terrorism.

And another goal was team up to protect the global environment with clean energy and other initiatives where Indian leadership is essential. When I was in India with the President in March, we made some major progress with regard to environmental concerns.

We were at a hotel next to the Taj Mahal when an agreement was signed between the United States and India to try to improve the environment, to improve access to energy. And, again, the Friendship Council had been in the forefront of trying to stress the environmental and energy needs and the fact that our two countries, one, the United States, being the leader in the

developed world and the other, India, being a leader in the developing world on these environmental and energy issues.

Finally is to join hands in the global campaign against polio, HIV/AIDS and other public health problems. Dr. Reddy, himself, is a dentist. He is very concerned about public health. He has been honored by the Indian government and by other organizations here in the United States, because of his concern, his public health concerns; and obviously, this is another area where the Friendship Council has been playing a major role and many members of the Indian caucus have taken the leadership in trying to improve the public health environment in India.

Let me just say that I just want to conclude my portion, if you will, of the Special Order by saying that I really admire the work of Dr. Reddy and the Indian American Friendship Council. I know that many of my colleagues do.

This is a bipartisan organization that works with Democrats and Republicans and certainly will continue to do the excellent job they do in the next Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I yield the balance to the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN).

#### THE INDIAN AMERICAN FRIENDSHIP COUNCIL AND STRENGTHENING INDIA-AMERICA TIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PEASE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) is recognized for the remainder of the minority leader's hour.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, it has been a pleasure to work with the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALONE) on strengthening the ties between the United States and Israel.

I want to join with him in praising the Indian American Friendship Council and discussing how important U.S.-India relations are for the people of the United States and the important work of the Indian-American Friendship Council in strengthening those ties.

Mr. Speaker, just a few years ago, half a billion Indians went to the polls to choose a new parliament, five times as many people who participated last month in the U.S. Presidential election. Frankly, a higher level of participation in democracy than we enjoy here in the United States.

India has demonstrated to the world that democracy is not just a system of government for the developed world, but, in fact, is a system of government that can work anywhere. Where else would democracy face such incredible challenges? A Nation of a billion people, perhaps the most ethnically and religiously diverse nation on the face of the earth, with one democratically elected parliament.